

# PEOPLE PROFILES Lance Corporal Lucas Majozi DCM



## FACT FILE

**D.O.B** 1916  
**P.O.B** Zastron, Orange Free State, South Africa  
**D.O.D** 1969  
**Tribe** Zulu  
**Years of service** Unknown  
**Rank** Lance Corporal  
**Unit** Native Military Corps (NMC)  
**Branch** 1/2 Field Force  
**Engagements** World War II North Africa  
**Awards** Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM)  
**Other work** Police Sergeant

**Lucas Majozi served with the Native Military Corps during World War II at the Battle of El Alamein, North Africa.**

As a black African in the South African army, he was not allowed to engage in direct combat with the enemy or carry a gun. He served instead as a stretcher-bearer, meaning that he was a first-aid attendant who picked up wounded soldiers and took them away from the battlefield to receive medical attention.

During the long battle of El Alamein in North Africa, which started on 23 October 1942, the Allies had to attack enemy forces. The South Africans needed to get through a minefield which the Germans had sown with more than 500,000 mines.

As the 1/2 Field Force Battalion forced its way through, they were attacked by heavy machine gun and artillery fire from German troops led by their commandant Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.

The battalion suffered severe casualties, many of whom needed urgent medical care and had to be removed from the combat zone. Majozi bravely tended his

white, wounded comrades and carried them off the battlefield. He worked hard all through the night despite being shot at by the Germans. At one point Majozi was injured, but he continued to do his job. If it weren't for the bravery of Majozi and his team of stretcher-bearers many more men would have died from their injuries.

Major-General Daniel Hermanus Pienaar, the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> South African Division, said of Majozi:

*'This soldier did most magnificent and brave things. With a number of bullets in his body he returned time after time into a veritable hell of machine gun fire to pull out wounded men. He is a man of whom South Africa can well be proud. He is a credit to his country.'*

For his bravery Majozi was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, the highest honour given to a black South African soldier during World War II.

After the War, Majozi returned to Zastron and joined the South African Police. He died in 1969. His medal can be seen at the South African National Museum of Military History along with his portrait painted by South African war artist Captain Neville Lewis.



## CITATION

On the night of October 23-24, Majozi accompanied his company into action as a stretcher-bearer. In the later stages of the action when he was within 100 yards of the enemy and under heavy fire, he thought nothing of his personal safety and continued to evacuate casualties assisted by co-bearers. He was then wounded by shrapnel, but he continued evacuating the wounded. Told by a medical corporal to go back to the regimental aid post, he replied that there were many wounded men still in the minefield.

He went back, and with the assistance of other stretcher-bearers, he brought back more wounded. After his co-bearer had become a casualty, he did not waver, but carried wounded men back alone on his back to the aid post.

When he was eventually told by the Company Commander to go back, he smilingly refused and remained on duty, working incessantly till he collapsed next morning through sheer exhaustion, stiffness, and loss of blood. His extreme devotion to duty and gallant conduct under continuous enemy fire throughout the night saved the lives of many wounded men who would otherwise have died through loss of blood or possible further wounds.'

Portrait of Lucas Majozi in his uniform as a stretcher bearer painted by Captain Neville Lewis



Majozi has a street named after him in Zastron, South Africa



Soldiers of the South African Native Military Corps issued with assegais instead of rifles

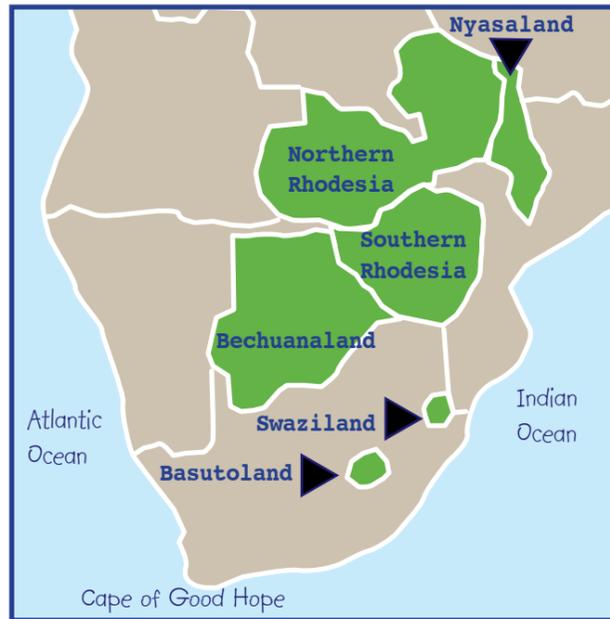
## Project: For your eyes only



You are medical orderly Lance Corporal Jacob Ekkers. You must tend to the wounded casualties that Majozi and his team are bringing in. Make a sling, an eye patch and a leg splint for your injured colleagues and practice your First Aid.

## SECTION 3

# Unit 2: British Southern Africa



**A**t the outbreak of war British Southern Africa eagerly answered Britain's call to join the war. In fact some tribal chiefs after declaring their allegiance to the King even offered troops against potential white rebellion in South Africa. As South Africa initially wished to remain neutral until Smuts replaced Hertzog as prime minister.

By 1941 the British army were desperately short of men and in the Middle East they were stretched to the limit. The British planned to mobilise indigenous Africans in British Southern Africa by creating a new military unit which would be completely separate from South Africa's Native Military Corp. This was highly controversial, as they faced pressure from South Africa to prohibit blacks from holding firearms.



On the African homefront a group of women of Palapye, Bechuanaland knit clothes for the Navy League.

Talks were held between British, South Africans and native chiefs, and agreement was reached to establish the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corp (AAPC).

### Features of the AAPC:

- British officers would command and control AAPC personnel
- All personnel had to swear an oath of allegiance to the Crown
- Military service could be anywhere in the world
- AAPC would be separate from South Africa's NMC
- More than a quarter of AAPC men were armed for self defence

### WHY DID THEY FIGHT?

Over 35,000 Africans joined the AAPC for many reasons including:

- **loyalty** to the British crown
- **duty** to follow their tribal chiefs
- **regular pay**
- to gain an **education** or improve their **literacy skills**
- to seek **new experiences** and **adventure**

Members of the AAPC built roads, were camp guards and built fortifications against axis invasion. They also served as heavy artillery gunners, specialist bridge-builders, camouflage smoke-makers, drivers and mechanics and front-line supply store shifters.

The unit was known as African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps until 5 October 1944, when it became known as the African Pioneer Corps until 1947 it was disbanded in 1949.

The men of the Basotho companies were great singers and they composed songs about their war experiences. This is a song about the ship Erinpura and their voyage to Malta. Sadly on 1 May 1943 the troopship *Erinpura* was sunk by a German air attack in the Mediterranean with the loss of 943 lives of whom 633 were Basotho soldiers of the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps.

### ERINPURA VOYAGE TO MALTA

The day we were bound for Malta  
Ships were sunk  
By the German flying birds  
They thundered! thunder! thunder!  
Bombard  
Bombard! Bombard! thundered!

Commander Monty was notified  
Matters have worsened at sea.  
The Junkers planes of the enemy  
Have escaped unseen by guard at Tunisia  
They fired with torpedoes  
Although the matters are thus  
We are determined to reach there

Telegraphs were dispatched  
Throughout the world  
The people mourned for the north  
They were gripped by sorrowful fear  
Services sounded in all the troops  
'You shall hear Hitler  
When No 4 is fired'.

All commanders of war assembled in Cairo  
To confer about new manoeuvre  
The Italians stamped about  
Stating that they had seen flares of cannons - artileries  
That was No 4, coughing in the wilderness

Masoulin lowered his flags on all sides unconditionally  
Struck by the army brigade  
Died, the death of a gun his verdict  
This was court martials  
The severe court of war.

Look out you Rommel  
They are now facing you  
Those of Monty and the allied  
Hear them roaring, bombarding all over  
The earth shaking dust blustered up  
Those were the artillery  
Fired by Ntsebo's sisters  
With those of the English.

At Matsieng, Mokethoaneng  
Fortress place of Seeiso  
Mantsebo the Chief of Basotho  
Was crowned a warrior  
Her name appeared in dispatch  
Among the allied people  
Displayed in all their courts.